
NEWS RELEASE

Judd Gregg

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SENATOR GREGG LAUDS EXPANSION OF PONDICHERRY WILDLIFE REFUGE

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH) today congratulated the Towns of Jefferson and Whitefield, and all parties involved in the successful expansion of the Pondicherry Division of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, which became final yesterday. Senator Gregg called the addition of 3,010 acres to the Refuge a “shining example” of cooperation in the finest tradition of New Hampshire conservation. The expansion was completed yesterday following the sale of the land by the Hancock Timber Resource Group to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which manages Pondicherry in partnership with the Audubon Society of New Hampshire and New Hampshire Fish and Game. The \$580,000 for the protection of the land was awarded through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which Senator Gregg has worked aggressively to fund through his position on the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior. Earlier this year, at the request of the Towns of Jefferson and Whitefield and NH Audubon, Senator Gregg contacted the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in support of the expansion. Senator Gregg had previously secured \$354,000 in LWCF funding through the Fiscal Year 1998 Interior Appropriations bill for the purchase of a 670 acre tract added to the Refuge in August of 2000.

Senator Gregg stated, “Pondicherry represents so much of what is great about our state. It contains critical wildlife habitat, serving as a home or stopover to over two hundred species of birds, along with moose, deer, beaver and otter, and it is also one of the most beautiful and awe inspiring scenic areas in New Hampshire. I am pleased to support a project that has been a model of public/private partnerships, and commend the Boards of Selectmen and Conservation Commissions of the Towns of Jefferson and Whitefield for prioritizing such an important local conservation initiative. Pondicherry has the support of not only the federal and state government and the Audubon Society of New Hampshire, but the local communities as well. It is a shining example of how individuals from all levels of government and the non-profit sector can work together to protect our environment.”

David Houghton, President of the Audubon Society of New Hampshire, “I couldn’t be more pleased that this critical wildlife habitat is now permanently protected. Senator Gregg’s efforts to protect land throughout the state is leaving a natural legacy from Pittsburg to Great Bay for generations to enjoy. I am gratified that Pondicherry is part of that legacy, and I want to thank Senator Gregg, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the citizens of Whitefield and Jefferson for their unqualified support of this special area.”

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Andrew French, Project Leader for the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, stated, “This 3,000 acre acquisition is an outstanding investment of our natural resources for the public, it supports tremendous variety wildlife species, and it is an excellent addition to the National

Wildlife Refuge System. The Service is looking forward to working with the towns of Whitefield and Jefferson, Audubon, the State of New Hampshire, and the public as we develop resource management plans and public use opportunities on the Pondicherry Division.”

Michele C. Ward, Chairman of the Jefferson Board of Selectmen, stated, “We feel the acquisition is very beneficial for Jefferson, the surrounding towns and visitors and for anyone interested in using Pondicherry, whether it be for recreation, bird watching or for enjoying the outdoors. Senator Gregg was instrumental in working at high levels with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to secure the funding to make this acquisition happen and we are grateful for his leadership. The expansion is a great feather in the Senator’s cap and will allow the public to further enjoy the natural beauty of the area.”

Dick Mallion, Chairman of the Whitefield Conservation Commission, stated, “The addition of some 1,300 acres in Whitefield, along with some 1,700 acres in Jefferson, to the Pondicherry Wildlife Preserve is very exciting news. The Whitefield Selectmen and the Conservation Commission have strongly supported this purchase that was made possible by the diligent work of the US Fish and Wildlife staff. It could not have happened without the personal involvement of Senator Gregg in securing the funding and approval. This marks a great day for conservation in New Hampshire.”

The Pondicherry Division of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge was established in Jefferson and Whitefield, New Hampshire on December 20, 2000 when 670 acres were purchased from the Hancock Timber Resource Group. The Pondicherry Division will be managed along with the 670 acres already administered by the Service, in a way that is compatible with the 296 acres of land and water owned by the Audubon Society of New Hampshire, and the State of New Hampshire known as the Pondicherry Wildlife Refuge.

The area known as Pondicherry is a National Natural Landmark and was most recently designated as an Important Bird Area in the State of New Hampshire. The Audubon Society of New Hampshire and the State of New Hampshire already owned two tracts of land and water which total 296 acres. The Audubon Society of New Hampshire ownership essentially surrounded Little Cherry Pond (20 acres) and Cherry Pond (100 acres). Both water bodies are considered great ponds and are therefore controlled by the State of New Hampshire.

This refuge area consists of a high quality complex of bogs, streams, ponds, and a variety of northern forest wetlands surrounded by a spruce and fir boreal forest. The black-backed woodpecker nests in the area as well as common loons, hooded mergansers, American black ducks, mallards, green-winged teal, ring-necked ducks and wood ducks. The northern harrier, broad-winged hawk, merlin, kestrel, and sharp-shinned hawk breed in the area. It may also include the most southern extent of nesting spruce grouse. Approximately 230 species of birds use the area during the year of which 125 species have been confirmed as breeding. Wildlife-dependant and compatible public uses, such as hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation will be available for area residents and the visiting public.

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